

# ECOPOLITICS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW YORK  
LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS  
AND NYLCV EDUCATION FUND  
FALL / WINTER 2020  

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It would be an understatement to say that 2020 is showing everyone the importance of staying healthy and adapting to change.

It is also proving something that we at NYLCV, and the conservation movement as a whole, have always known: how necessary it is to listen to science. When the experts say that a crisis is on its way, we must respond swiftly and boldly.

Too many New Yorkers live in communities overburdened by pollution, a situation sadly highlighted by the current health crisis. COVID-19 puts people with respiratory illnesses like asthma at higher risk, illustrating the importance of reducing pollution and improving air quality. And all too often those communities are made up of people of color, subject to environmental racism that we all must work together to put an end to. We will get through the health crisis—but we will still have a climate crisis. Our current events underscore that environmental and climate justice are more important now than ever.

That's why we are continuing to fight for our priorities like clean air and water, clean energy for all, well-maintained parks and greenspaces, clean transportation and environmental justice.

We are excited that New York State and Congress are implementing

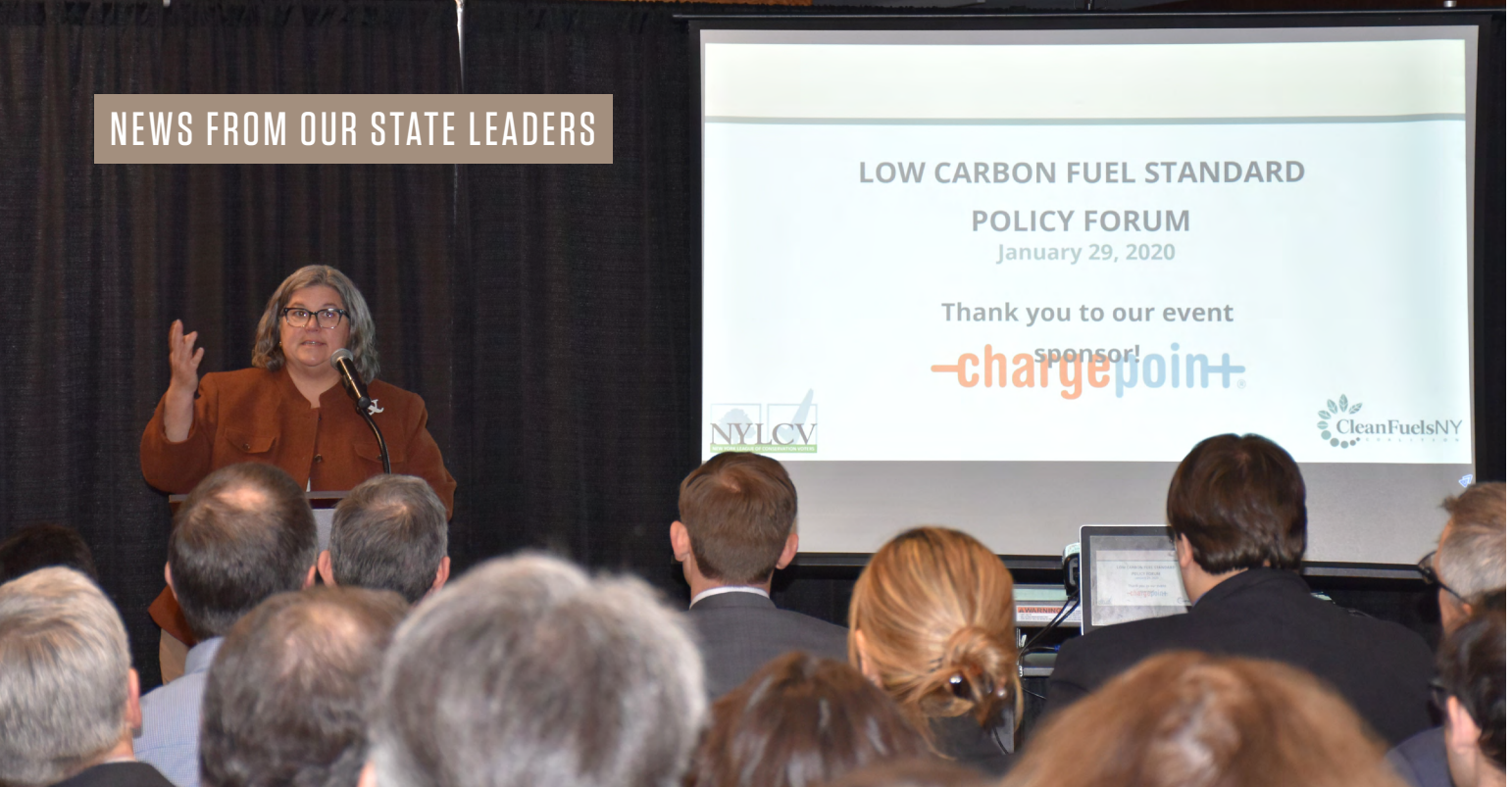


policies that address these priorities including improving the way we site renewable energy and investing in our parks and natural areas. You can read more about these accomplishments below.

The crisis also illustrates the importance of electing leaders who will fight for the environment and public health, and follow scientific evidence. We are thrilled to welcome all of the newly elected candidates we supported this election cycle, proving that the environment is a winning issue at the voting booth. We will continue our work to keep climate change a top priority for voters, candidates and elected officials. We hope you will join us.

Thanks for your support,

**Julie Tighe**  
President, NYLCV/EF



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF NYLCV (TOP); BY HUGO L. GONZALEZ (BOTTOM RIGHT)

### *Assemblymember Carrie Woerner speaks at our policy forum on a clean fuel standard*

**Early this winter**, we held a policy forum about the benefits of a clean fuel standard (CFS). The event focused on how a CFS can help the state reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, the state's largest source of emissions, and spur widespread deployment of electric vehicles and innovation in alternative fuel industries. NYLCV is leading a coalition, Clean Fuels NY, that is advocating for passing of a CFS in NY.

This spring, the Governor and State Legislature passed a budget filled with NYLCV priorities and the environment was one of the big winners. Despite being developed at a time when New York was climbing the COVID-19 mountain, the State embraced clean energy and the environment as a way to boost our economy, protect our air, water, lands and public health, and fight the long-term climate crisis.

First, the budget included legislation to reform the way we site renewable energy generation and transmission projects, established an Office of Renewable Energy Permitting at the NYS Department of State, laid out a sensible, stepwise permitting process, and directed the new Office to establish

standard operating conditions for wind and solar projects.

Second, e-bikes and e-scooters were legalized, providing clean transportation options that will reduce emissions from the transportation sector.

Third, the landmark Environmental Protection Fund was fully-funded at \$300 million, providing critical investments in projects to improve and protect water quality, enhance recycling, preserve land, promote recreational opportunities, and fight climate change.

Last, the budget also included an additional \$500 million for clean water infrastructure projects across the state, and a ban on disposable polystyrene and hydrofracking.

During a special legislative session this summer, the Legislature passed several of our priority bills including legislation to make illegal dumping of hazardous chemicals a felony, reduce the use of toxins like trichloroethylene (TCE) and Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), expand the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's regulatory authority over Class C streams, expand parking for electric

vehicles, protect parkland in Westchester, and reduce road salt pollution in the Adirondacks.

And while the budget included a proposed \$3 billion Environmental Bond Act, disappointingly the Division of Budget refused to certify the proposal to the November ballot due to the state's fiscal situation due to the pandemic. It would have invested in environmental projects while jumpstarting the economy by creating tens of thousands of family-supporting jobs. We are helping to lead a coalition of more than 125 groups that are working to get it on the ballot next year.

Despite this setback, to say this legislative session was a win for the environment feels like a vast understatement. These efforts demonstrate that our leaders—Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Heastier, Senators Kaminsky and Parker, and Assemblymembers Englebright and Cusick—and their colleagues in the State Legislature are prioritizing protecting the environment, fighting climate change, and promoting clean energy. New York continues to lead in the fight against climate change.





## THE LATEST FROM CITY HALL

### *We participated in a Play Fair for Parks campaign rally at City Hall*

**As New York City** grappled with the economic ramifications of COVID-19, there were unfortunately many cuts to environmental programs in the City's budget.

These cuts include a 14% reduction of the Parks Department budget. Nearly 200 park workers will lose their jobs, including Urban Park Rangers who educate the public about nature, Parks Enforcement Patrol officers, Green Thumb workers, and Natural Areas Group staff.

More food scraps and yard waste will now go to landfills where they will decompose, emit methane gas, contribute to climate change, and impede the City from achieving its Zero Waste goals.

The City budget also cut \$65 million from the Fair Fares Program, which subsidizes public transportation for low-income New Yorkers, and diminished investments in bus lane

infrastructure. These cuts will make public transportation less accessible for New Yorkers. This could cause more people to drive and increase emissions from the transportation sector, New York's #1 contributor to climate change.

These important initiatives will remain priorities for NYLCV into next year as we continue working to advance our Policy Agenda and develop our next Council Scorecard.

### *NYC Parks Bronx Aqueduct Walk*

Although we are pleased that the budget preserves funding for 150 park worker and gardener positions that we helped secure last year as part of the Play Fair for Parks campaign last year, we are troubled that drastic cuts were made to other park worker positions. Greenspaces provide places for people to get fresh air and exercise, as well as help mitigate climate change, and New Yorkers rely on them now more than ever.

While \$2.8 million was restored for community composting, the City suspended organic waste curbside collections and almost entirely ended dropoff opportunities for what is the biggest source of residential waste.





## EMERGING LEADERS

Our Emerging Leaders program continues to build the environmental leaders of our future. The Emerging Leaders program gives early- and mid-career professionals who want to make a difference on environmental issues an opportunity to network with each other while becoming empowered advocates for the cause. Our events inform the next generation of environmental leaders about key sustainability issues through interactive discussions and gives them the tools to begin to make a difference now.

We held two events as part of our breakfast speaker series. Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner at NYC Department of Sanitation discussed recycling and waste reduction initiatives. Julia Eiferman, Senior Policy Advisor at NYC Mayor's Office of Resiliency (ORR), discussed ORR's sustainability and emission reduction programs and how they improve the city's resiliency.

We also held a virtual happy hour featuring Assemblymember-elect Khaleel Anderson and Newsday editorial board member Mark Chiusano to discuss the 2020 election season and politicking during a pandemic.

If you know someone who would like to become a member, email us at [development@nylv.org](mailto:development@nylv.org).

## CORPORATE PARTNERS ECO-BREAKFAST PROGRAM

**Amidst the COVID** social distancing restrictions, our Corporate Partner Eco-Breakfast program is still going strong. We transitioned seamlessly to a virtual format and we are thankful that our partners continue to support the program even during this uncertain time. So far this year, we have held 9 Eco-Breakfasts virtually, and 12 breakfasts overall. We were joined by leaders in clean energy, environmental protection, and waste.

Eco-Breakfasts continue to offer our board and partners an opportunity to engage with each other about environmental issues, and provide occasions for our partners to hear from business, environmental, and political leaders. The Corporate Partners program plays a critical role in advancing sustainability by building bridges between the environmental and business communities.



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*NYC Department of Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg joined us for an Eco-Breakfast earlier this year.*

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If you would like to become a Corporate Partner, learn more about the program, or involved, please email [development@nylv.org](mailto:development@nylv.org).

## CORPORATE PARTNERS SPOTLIGHT: INVENERGY

**Invenergy is solving** energy challenges facing customers and communities around the world to create a cleaner energy future.

They have successfully developed more than 25,000 megawatts of wind, solar, and natural gas power generation facilities as well as advanced energy storage projects. To date, Invenergy's projects have generated enough energy to power 5.2 million homes. Economic, environmental, and social sustainability are at the core of their business.

Invenergy's projects provide clean, reliable energy while boosting local economies and creating lasting impact. They have a strong track record of advancing New York's clean energy future while creating good-paying,

# Invenergy

green jobs and developing American-made energy. In 2019, Invenergy's New York projects had a total economic investment of over \$8 million in home communities through wages and benefits, landowner payments, and added tax revenue, in addition to partnering with local organizations to support education and veteran services, among other causes.

Invenergy is committed to bringing diverse, innovative energy solutions to help New York meet and exceed its clean energy standards, and supplying affordable, sustainable, and diversified energy to the grid.

## OUR SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM GROWS



NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

# Clean Bus Guide

The NYLCV  
Clean School  
Bus Guide,  
available [here](#)



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF NYLCV

**This year we continued** our electric school bus campaign throughout New York State with generous support from the New York Community Trust and the League of Conservation Voters' Chispa program.

NYLCV Education Fund is working with local groups and coalitions across the state to build support for electric school buses. We developed a Clean Bus Guide, which will serve as a toolkit for community groups to launch their own electric school bus campaigns. We are continuing to work with state decision-makers and partner organizations to ensure that the Volkswagen Settlement funds are equitably distributed to environmental justice communities that have historically experienced disproportionately high rates of air pollution and that school and community leaders have the tools to take advantage of these funds when they become available.



### *We launched our NYC Clean School Bus Coalition*

In New York City, we launched the NYC Clean School Bus Coalition which includes organizations working on labor, environment, social justice, public health and more to help bring electric school buses to environmental justice communities. We are advocating for local legislation that would phase out diesel school buses in NYC by 2040.



## CANDIDATE FORUMS: VIRTUALLY AND IN PERSON



*Candidates at our candidate forum for Congressional Districts 1 and 2*

**Throughout the year**, the NYLCV Education Fund held candidate forums around the state with much success, facilitating dialogue between the voters and political candidates to make sure the environment is a high priority in the campaigns.

Earlier this winter, we held an in-person forum in the New York Hall of Science to ask candidates running for Queens Borough President where they stood on environmental issues. The issues discussed included the imminent threat of climate change, protecting Queens communities

from the risk of flooding, the need for sustainable transportation options, and the importance of improving local air quality in Queens neighborhoods.

In the spring during to COVID-19 crisis, we continued to hold subsequent candidate forums in a virtual setting still drawing hundreds of voters to hear from their potential representatives and engaging them in their local elections.

We held virtual candidate forums for open seats in Congressional Districts 1 and 2 on Long Island, Congressional District 15 in the south Bronx,

Congressional District 17 in Westchester and Rockland counties, State Senate District 1 on Long Island, State Senate District 55 in Western New York, and Assembly District 125 encompassing Ithaca and Cortland. Candidates answered questions about investments in renewable energy, how the recovery from COVID can include more sustainable policies, the preservation of public lands, addressing air quality disparities in environmental justice neighborhoods, creating green jobs, and controlling the spread of invasive species. To view all of these forums, visit [youtube.com/nylcv](https://youtube.com/nylcv).

*Candidates and partners at our Queens Borough President candidate forum*



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF NYLCV

## THE 2020 ELECTION SEASON

**As the White House** continues to roll back environmental protections, it is more important than ever that we elect leaders who will fight for a sustainable future. Voting for the environment is one of the most important ways to advocate for climate action and we made it easy for New Yorkers to decide who to vote for.

We endorsed candidates in 127 races—a record number for NYLCV.

Every election year, we develop candidate questionnaires based on the League's policy priorities, including protecting public health, building a clean energy future, protecting clean water, and mitigating climate change. The board made endorsements based on interviews with the candidates, questionnaire responses, and Environmental Scorecard grades.

We're proud to have helped Council Member Ritchie Torres of the Bronx win his election to Congress in District 15. We are thrilled to welcome all of the newly elected candidates we supported including Representatives-elect Jammal Bowman and Mondaire Jones, State Senators-elect Samra Brouk, Jabari Brisport, Jeremy Cooney, and Sean Ryan and State Assemblymembers-elect Khaleel Anderson, Chris Burdick, Michael Durso, Anna Kelles, and Matt Simpson.

This election cycle was a significant step in asserting the importance of the environment and a clean energy economy to voters.



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☐

**NYLCV** to support environmentally responsible politics (not tax deductible)

☐

**NYLCVEF** to support environmental education (tax deductible, as provided by law)

*I have enclosed a contribution of:*

☐

**\$250**

☐

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## CONGRESS VOTES TO PROTECT PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERS

**Following years of** NYLCV's advocacy along with LCV and other partners, Congress passed legislation to fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The Great American Outdoors Act addresses the maintenance backlog on public lands, and permanently allocates \$900 million a year to the LWCF. The Fund invests in parks, playgrounds, rivers, beaches, trails, and other natural areas across the country. New York State alone has received over \$348.4 million in funding over the past five decades for programs that support recreational hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities, and protect places such as the Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River, Gateway National Recreation Area, Tietzeneyck Mountain, Theodore Roosevelt's birthplace, Women's Rights National Historical Park, and the Coney Island Boardwalk. This bill will go a very long way in supporting our open spaces.

This legislation will protect our public lands, including our national parks, for generations to come.



*NYLCV meets with Senator Gillibrand*